

Research Paper

APSU Writing Center Handout

A **research paper** lets you explore a topic you're curious about while showing what you've learned. You'll use your own thinking along with information from trustworthy sources to explain or argue a point.

Choosing a Topic

Start with your assignment sheet. Read it carefully to understand what is required.

Choose a topic you find interesting or enjoyable.

Brainstorm your ideas by web mapping or explaining your topic to a friend.

Finding Resources

Use your library databases to find credible information.

Narrow your search by using specific keywords.

- **Example:** Instead of searching “climate change,” try “climate change and coastal erosion” or “climate change impact on coral reefs.”

Evaluate your sources by keeping only those that are relevant to your topic.

Cite your sources as you go by writing down main ideas and keeping track of quotes.

Developing a Thesis Statement

Establish a thesis statement that explains the paper's main idea or argument.

Focus your argument so it is specific, arguable, and concise.

Clarify your position or answer to the question you are addressing.

Connect each body paragraph of your writing back to the thesis statement.

Creating an Outline

Acts as a blueprint for your paper and keeps your writing organized.

Help you plan the order of your ideas before you start writing.

Serves as a roadmap connecting your introduction to your conclusion.

Writing the Paper

Free write your ideas and let them flow without worrying about grammar or structure. It's easier to edit a full page than a blank one!

Focus on one paragraph at a time.

Don't aim for perfection right away, get your ideas written down first.

Use transitions between paragraphs to help your paper flow smoothly from one idea to the next.

Introduction

Present your thesis and main topic.

Explain the purpose and focus of your paper.

Provide background information or key concepts your reader needs to understand about the topic.

Body Paragraphs

Present your main arguments and support them with evidence and citations.

Summarize, analyze, and explain how the citations connect to your thesis rather than simply adding quotes.

Use topic sentences to introduce each paragraph and guide readers through your ideas.

Conclusion

Rewrite your thesis in new words.

Summarize your key points and explain why your citations matter.

Connect back to your introduction or suggest areas for future research or discussion.

Revising and Editing

Take a break and then revise as you will be more likely to catch your mistakes.

Get feedback with a classmate or a writing center tutor to offer outside perspectives.

Questions to Consider:

Does my paper flow logically from start to finish?

Are my ideas clearly connected with smooth transitions?

Is my thesis supported throughout the paper?

Are spelling, grammar, and word choice, correct?

Introduction: (Introduce your topic, explain why your research is important, and state your thesis.)

Paragraph 1: (Present your first main argument and use evidence to support it.)

Paragraph 2: (Present your second main argument and use evidence to support it.)

Paragraph 3: (Present your third main argument and use evidence to support it.)

Conclusion: (Summarize your points, rewrite your thesis in a new way, and explain why the research matters.)

References

Liou, K. (2022). *Research Paper Writing Process*. San José State University Writing Center.

<https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/docs/handouts/Research%20Paper%20Writing%20Process-Updated.pdf>

Northern Michigan University Writing Center. (2025). *Writing a Research Paper*. Northern

Michigan University. <https://nmu.edu/writingcenter/tips-writing-research-paper>

University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center. (2025). *Writing a Research Paper*.

<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/planresearchpaper/>